

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 028 906

RE 001 708

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The New Look in Secondary School Reading Programs.

Pub Date Nov 68

Note-15p.; Paper presented at National Council of Teachers of English meeting, Milwaukee, Nov. 25-30, 1968

EDRS Price MF-\$0.25 HC-\$0.85

Descriptors-Content Reading, Critical Reading, \*Educational Trends, \*High School Curriculum, Individualized Reading, Linguistics, Literature, Mass Media, \*Reading Instruction, \*Secondary Education

The new look in education has changed from the old quantity concept of textbook orientation to a quality concept of individual education. Applied to secondary school reading programs, this new look has nine facets. (1) Growth in reading must be a lifelong process facilitated by carefully planned teaching at all grade levels. (2) Reading is now, and must continue to be, accepted as one of the language arts and be written as such in curriculum building. (3) The structure of reading instruction, its scope and sequence, must be founded on an understanding of the nature of the symbolic process and the linguistic principles of our language. (4) Attention must be given to the adjustment of reading instruction to individual differences. (5) Teachers must accept a special responsibility for developing critical reading and thinking. (6) Reading material as part of the mass media must be considered an indispensable adjunct to the other mass media. (7) Reading programs based on student needs should place heavy emphasis on literature. (8) The reading program at the secondary level should be a balanced one. (9) The basic reading period and the selections used for basic reading must assume even greater importance in the new look in reading programs than they did in the past. References are listed. (MD)

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Nov '68U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE  
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### The New Look in Secondary School Reading Programs

The new look in reading programs in the secondary schools goes far deeper than the employment of new gadgets of new materials of instruction. It reaches down to the deep concern that each teacher must have for the place of reading in the new education.

While I would agree that our society has a general obligation to educate our children and youth to adapt smoothly and confidently to a continually changing world, it is my opinion that the primary contribution which the school can make toward the realization of this general aim is the promotion of the intellectual development of each student to his capacity. Within the limits of this general purpose of the schools in our society

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I propose first, to consider briefly the new look in education, and then to suggest a possible pattern for the new look of secondary school reading programs within this new education.

The New Look in Education

It seems to me that any study of the new look in education must begin with a view of what we are changing. Our curriculum in the past has been dominated by the textbook. The curriculum was composed of separate containers and the textbook was the ladle used to dole out to the students the prescribed quantities of knowledge. If acquisition of knowledge is the sole criterion of intellectual development then the intellectual development of our pupils was well nourished in the past and no drastic change in the curriculum was needed.

Now I wonder if our schools really have changed from the old quantity concept of education to a new quality concept of education. If this change has indeed occurred I think it must have happened as a result of a change in the teaching behavior of teachers - rather than solely as a result of a change in printed curricula or a change in textbooks. In a recent Canadian Teachers' Federation research study on Teacher Influence on the Curriculum the question was asked of principals and administrators: "What methods do you advocate for obtaining teacher acceptance of curriculum change?" Two hundred (almost 50 per cent) of the 418 suggestions received indicated that teachers would accept curriculum revision if they were allowed to take part in planning the

change. Perhaps any new look which has occurred in education in general and any new look in reading instruction in particular has been in direct relation to the amount of teacher participation in curriculum revision.

In my opinion the concept of quality rather than quantity education is the single most important idea for us to grasp in this era of continuing curriculum change. The curriculum of this quality education is individual student centred not subject centred. It is concerned with what is happening to pupils as human beings. This concept is basic to our understanding of the new look in secondary school reading programs.

Under the heading of quality education, I define intellectual development tentatively as growth and maturation of each student's skills of learning as well as his understanding of concepts, principles, generalizations, and knowledge acquired through use of these skills.

This tentative definition emphasizes two aspects of development - the processes of learning and the products of learning in terms of information or concepts or, knowledge. The processes of learning are, in a sense, the means to uncover and discover knowledge or the products of learning. This definition requires then that we think also of a growing knowledge about how to learn

as a part of a student's intellectual development. Growth in the skills of learning is evidenced when students improve their processes for investigating, inquiring, exploring and discovering. Such skills can be developed only when students may use them as an integral part of all regular subject matter courses. Emphasis now needs to be placed in these courses on fact-finding skills and the use of knowledge rather than the memorization of certain facts. Moreover, there are certain intellectual skills which transcend any particular subject matter - for example the disciplined use of curiosity, learning to draw inferences from data, the habit of searching for relationships and analogies, and honest use of evidence. It is in solving or arriving at new levels of understanding of problems, large and small, that students have an opportunity to develop intellectually.

The New Look in Reading at the Secondary Level

I have attempted to establish the understanding that the main challenge for change in quality education involves the utilization of any specific subject for the more effective intellectual development of children. It can readily be seen that in most the new learning activities reading holds a preeminent place. As we consider possible changes in basic instruction in reading, several significant developments may be predicted. Of greatest importance is far wider provision for developmental reading throughout the upper grades, high school and the colleges and universities.

The first feature of the new look in secondary school reading programs then, is recognition that growth in reading is a lifelong process and that such growth is greatly facilitated through carefully planned teaching at all grade levels, including senior secondary grades. Efforts will be intensified to promote greater mastery of and independence in the basic reading skills. The goal sought is each student's maximum achievement in harmony with his capabilities. Progress toward this goal will greatly extend the possibilities of enrichment through personal reading. It will also provide a broader base on which to develop the specialized reading and study skills needed in all secondary school subjects.

As a second part of the new look in secondary school programs, reading is now recognized as one of the language arts. Curriculum builders are now constructing programs in which they attempt to show that the basic principles of reading and writing mirror each other. But although research and experience indicate that language skills are related there is no implication that individuals develop these skills evenly. Nor are the relationships perfect. However, the concepts about the interrelatedness of the language arts have significance for teachers as they develop the new programs in reading.

The concept of "structure" is a third factor which has affected reading instruction. The scope and sequence of comprehension and vocabulary skills development, for example, must be founded in part on understandings of the nature of the symbolic process and the linguistic principles of our language. Teachers in training should gain insights about concepts such as these while they are discovering the relationship of language to the reading process.

Teachers should know that the comprehension skills of reading for details, for main ideas, for understanding an author's organization and for inferences form the woof, and the ability to synthesize these skills forms the warp of the fabric of understanding which good readers weave as they read. They should know how these comprehension skills operate at the factual, conceptual and associational levels. They should also know the basic principles of vocabulary development and how this pattern of growth relates to each student he is teaching.

With this structure in mind the judicious teacher can distribute the kinds of questions according to an individual's or a group's ability to answer or their skills development needs. This distribution of questions can be greatly facilitated if the specific skills development purpose of each comprehension and vocabulary question is identified before it is asked.

The concept of structure carries over into learning to read in any subject. We can take reading literature as an example. Dwight Burton (1) has pointed out that a "committee of teachers in Toronto concluded that the basic principles of structure in literature are to be found in the 'different forms and the recurrent themes'". Proceeding from this premise, Burton suggested a four layer description of the structure of literature:

Layer 1 - Themes which develop from four basic relationships: Man and deity; man and other men; man and nature; man and himself.

Layer 2 - Modes, of which there are four basic ones, romantic, comic, tragic, and ironic.

Layer 3 - Genres, of which the modern imaginative ones are novel, short story, poem, and play.

Layer 4 - The individual selection.

Burton concluded that learning to read literature implied an awareness of these layers of structure and that teaching literature reading skills occurs in this general context.

The small beginnings of current efforts to adjust reading instruction to individual differences in the secondary school forms the fourth aspect of the new look in reading programs at this level. Thus far, major attention has been given to the needs of the poorer readers. In the future equal provision will be made for the better readers who should be advancing rapidly in reading skills. Progress

in reading will be paced far less in terms of age and grade norms and far more in terms of individual capabilities, motivation, and needs. Implicit in this progress is a continuously diagnostic approach to reading instruction. An important feature of this approach at the secondary level is that students can become partners with the teacher in the diagnosis. Having students keep simple graphical records of their skills achievement is quite often an effective way of promoting this diagnostic partnership. In this way, students are more likely to be active participants in learning and more highly motivated to improve their reading skills.

Student-team learning is another promising approach to the problem of coping with individual differences in reading abilities. It consists of groups of two to five pupils combined for mutual aid in learning in such experiences as skills instruction, discussions following individual study guides and practice in oral activities and remedial drills.

The success of the team technique of instruction rests heavily upon the suitability of specialized material termed a "learning package" in educational jargon. The task incorporated in the learning package must be clear, and specific. Provision for scoring the results as soon as the task is finished adds to learning incentive and increases effectiveness of the learning package.

The SRA Reading Labs or the Scholastic Literature Units may be used as team learning packages. Small groups of students working at the same level of materials could exchange answer sheets and check each other's work and then refer to the keys for verification. Teachers could prepare pupil-team learning packages very easily by cutting pages of selected vocabulary and comprehension exercises from workbooks, and filing them, complete with answer keys, in folders.

Team discussions following individual study guides or total class presentations seem much preferred by students compared with the typical recitation in which each one recites when called upon.

Again in team discussion, there are several conditions which contribute to successful results. The tasks set must call for a specific written response, usually the listing of answers by the group secretary; to ask a group to "discuss" without requiring a written product is to invite aimless verbal activity. The quality of the questions also contributes to the success of the discussion; selective recall or listing of ideas by categories calls for more thinking than answering multiple-choice or short-answer questions. Critical thinking questions, in which evaluations are required, are also suitable for team discussion. In all types of group discussion, pupils need an immediate evaluation of their written records of the discussion. This is usually provided by having one group read its

record while others check their lists to find additional or varying items to write in their records.

As still another, a fifth part of the new look in secondary school reading programs, teachers of any subject will have a special responsibility for developing their students' abilities of critical reading and critical thinking. Critical reading does not exist in a vacuum by itself but can be thought of best as being rather closely related to critical thinking.

David Russell described critical thinking as a three-factor ability. It includes, first, an attitude factor of questioning and suspending judgment; second, a cognitive or functional or operational factor which involves the use of methods of logical inquiry and problem solving; and third, a judgment factor of evaluating in terms of some norm or standard or consensus. The attitude factor may mean checking on the assumptions of the speaker or the author. The cognitive or operational factor may include selecting significant words and phrases in a statement, identifying emotion and bias in a speaker or author, and seeking out stereotypes and cliches. The third, the judgment factor, may include such things as deciding whether one statement or thought is relevant or irrelevant to another, detecting an illogical inconsistency and deciding whether a conclusion really follows from the given facts.

You have heard the statement that we teach reading in an age of mass communications. This fact forms the sixth face of the new look in reading programs at the secondary level. Reading material in the form of hard backs, paper backs, newspapers and magazines constitutes a considerable part of the mass media and is an indispensable adjunct to the other mass media. Concurrent with the phenomenal growth of the mass media are two other facts we must face as teachers of reading today. One is that the number of young people as a percentage of the total population of North America grows greater every year, and the other is that their influence on the economy grows proportionately.

In his introduction to a very practical book entitled Understanding the Mass Media, Nicholas Tucker (2) of England states that

Many older people condemn teen-agers for not behaving as they did when they were young, forgetting that the situation has changed and that the teen-ager has money, time and opportunity as never before to establish himself as a consumer and to demand his own standards. Yet in many ways he is being manipulated, though by commercial rather than by conventional forces.

Tucker concluded, "Faced with the many forces which go to made up the teen-age cult, and which sometimes preserve their grip right through adulthood, how sad that the school should have so little part in mediating between those pressures and the child itself. One result is that these forces have had

their own way, and set their own standards - many of them deplorably low - for far too long,"

Certainly part of the new look in reading for our secondary students should pay some attention to the place of the reading aspects of the mass media in our society and to the devices used in the mass media to influence opinions and buying.

Need I mention to this audience the next, the seventh feature of the new look in secondary school reading. When teachers are faced with the never ending task of teaching the communication skills and arts there may be a temptation to let the literature reading program virtually disappear. One would hope that any reading program based on the needs and characteristics of young people would place heavy emphasis on literature.

Time permits only a glance at the eighth characteristic of the new look in high school reading programs. This glance is in nature of a survey. The reading program at this level whether for slow, average or superior readers, should be a balanced one. A plan that provides for this kind of program should include:

1. A literature reading program that is consciously directed toward the emotional and intellectual enjoyment and appreciation of good poetry, prose and drama.

2. A developmental reading program that reinforces and extends the basic reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. In part, this is a continuation of the earlier reading program, but, more particularly, in the higher grades, it is an extension into the more subtle areas of interpretation, reaction, and critical evaluation. The developmental program in the higher grade levels should also include instruction in the use of general reference books, in more effective ways of reading examinations, and in corrective and remedial reading instruction where this is necessary.
3. A curricular reading program that is planned to develop a method of studying and of promoting the reading skills needed for achievement in the various subjects, and that involves the cooperation of the teachers of these subjects.
4. A news reading program that relates current happenings to the daily lives of the students and teaches them how to read newspapers with the kind of insight which is demanded of today's educated citizens.

All four parts of this balanced reading program should be related to activities that stress writing, speaking and listening.

Let me conclude with a look at the ninth face of the new reading program in the secondary grades, by stating that the basic reading period and the selections used for basic reading may well assume even greater importance in the new look in reading programs than they have in the past - for several reasons. First, during an era of special pressure for subject-matter learning, the balanced personal development of each student must not be neglected. Second, a large number of youth in our schools are culturally deprived. When literature materials are carefully chosen, they can help to give adolescents not only some kind of balance to the concept of reading as involving solely the acquisition of subject-matter facts, but also a growing acquaintance with their literary heritage. Thirdly, reading may play a part in the cultivation of wholesome social attitudes, moral sensitivity and standards of conduct that will guide both thinking and behavior. The need is urgent these days - not only for individuals who have well-developed intellectual powers but also for self-directed individuals who are morally sensitive and who make rational choices in light of sound standards. There are unlimited opportunities for promoting growth in both of these directions through reading.

References

1. Burton, Dwight L., "Teaching Students to Read Literature," Reading Instruction in Secondary Schools, Perspectives in Reading No. 2. International Reading Association, 1964, 89.
2. Tucker, Nicholas, Understanding the Mass Media. Cambridge: University Press, 1966, 6.